

MAN, COSMOS AND MICROCOSM

By Vernon D. Tate

The greatest single resource of mankind is his store of knowledge, which in turn is based upon his unique ability to create and record knowledge as well as to use that amassed by his predecessors and contemporaries. Man is as he is through the diligent exercise of this valuable faculty. Therein lies his greatest often unrealized problem, notably how best to draw upon the vast reservoir of mental energy which is more or less at his command. With some millions, say twenty at a venture, of different books in existence the individual, if he is to capitalize his heritage, must search out and assimilate those relevant parts that he can contrive to bring within the horizon of his experience.

If all records existed only in single copies, as a surprising number do exist even today, life would be infinitely less complex and living would be immeasurably more difficult. We live as it were upon a great plain not unlike the base of an inverted pyramid whose apex lies in the remote past when the first records were created. To live we must know; how to know is to know how to live. It is an arresting fact that each generation can know progressively less of the total human heritage than the preceeding generation yet progressively more time is being spent in the "educational" process. Education now more than ever before is a continuing effort which only ends with life itself. Conventions of "retirement" and new emphasis on geriatrics are bringing to an increasing number of individuals the rewards of an intellectual Indian Summer of achievement. Thus the young and the old in our civilization are afforded exceptional opportunities, the one armed with the freshness of youth and discovery, the other fortified with the wisdom and discrimination of experience; both are abundantly supplied with the necessary ingredient of time. The middle period is no less active. Pressures incident to the achievement of an economic position wherein knowledge is essential, are paralleled

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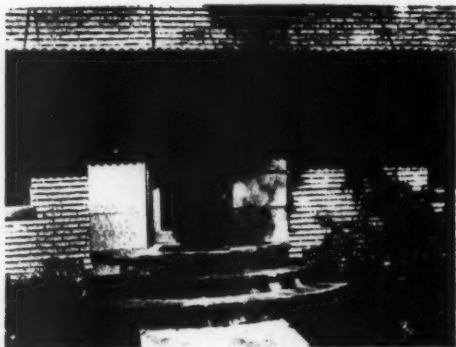
18th CENTURY NEWSPAPERS: A NEGLECTED PRIMARY SOURCE

By R. M. Wiles

An important source of information about eighteenth-century English life which most historians have disregarded is the provincial newspaper; yet the news sheets printed outside of London before 1800 are so numerous, so diversified, and so rich in local and regional news that they ought not to remain neglected. It is difficulty of access, undoubtedly, that has caused these local papers to be left unread except by a few graduate students. The excellent *Hand-list of English Provincial Newspapers and Periodicals 1700-1760*, by G. A. Cranfield, W. S. Ward's *Index and Finding List of Serials Published in the British Isles, 1789-1832*, and the *British Union-Catalogue of Periodicals* by J. D. Stewart and associates (now in progress) have made it comparatively easy to find the papers in English libraries. There are not so many of these country journals as there were twenty years ago, but the total bulk is considerable, and in order to examine them one must spend many weeks in travelling to the eighty-odd towns where the irreplaceable files are kept. The next step is surely to have these rare papers microfilmed.

It could be argued that the London newspapers ought to be microfilmed before those published in the country, especially as most of the news in provincial papers was copied from the London journals. It is also true that some provincial news is to be found in London papers, and that some of these London papers were distributed in the provinces, a few even having special country editions. On the other hand several London papers would have disappeared without a trace if substantial portions of them had not been reprinted in one or more of the country papers; for example, *Baker's News*, or the *Whitehall Journal* is quoted frequently and amply in the *Gloucester Journal*. If it were true that the provincial papers contained only second-hand news and advertisements of preposterous medicines, we could ignore them. The fact is that in addition to

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Vol. III

No. 2

MICROCOSM is a publication of University Microfilms, with central offices at 313 North First Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

MICROCOSM is intended to bring interesting news of microfilming in all of its phases to the attention of librarians and others who, in the opinion of the Publisher, will benefit by receiving it.

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A NEGLECTED PRIMARY SOURCE

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the usual "freshest advices foreign and domestic" taken from the London journals, many provincial papers of the eighteenth century have abundant material of great interest to anyone who wishes to get close to day-by-day English life.

The suggestion that the files of English provincial papers published before 1800 should be made available by microfilm would be justified if the only object were to make possible a thoroughgoing history of early journalism — editorial practices, advances in typography, developments in display advertising, newspaper stamp taxes, and the rapid expansion of news services in England. That seems obvious enough. What is less obvious, until one has examined the papers themselves, is that the provincial news sheets exhibit many important aspects of the life and interests of the English people. It is no exaggeration to assert that without consulting the columns of the *Norwich Mercury*, the *Gloucester Journal*, the *Birmingham Gazette*, and the papers printed in Exeter, Bristol, Stamford, Reading, and eighty other towns, the historians must remain only partially informed about eighteenth-century education, religion, music, sports, touring theatrical companies, industrial disputes, inland and sea-port trade, public health, road building, postal services, river transport, movements of troops, book sales, ship arrivals and departures, privateering, earthquakes, and the weather. The copying of the provincial newspapers in microfilm will make it possible for significant re-

search to be conducted in all these areas of interest with comparative ease, at low cost, and with no risk to the papers themselves.

R. M. Wiles is a professor of English at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. He has done a considerable amount of research with British provincial newspapers, which he plans to publish in the near future.

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by the equally stringent requirements of intellectual growth, for paradoxically material achievement is becoming more and more linked to intellectual maturity. Time, however, is limited and must be budgeted with care, that is to say it is necessary to plan and organize efficiently an individual approach to learning. Laissez faire can have no place in contemporary education.

Our civilization is based on the duplication of recorded experience, thought, achievement and even speculation, for a reproduction is the expression of a need which cannot otherwise be satisfied. A single example however important is accessible to few individuals and therefore may fail to realize its potential. Conversely originals most duplicated, as for example the Bible, exercise the greatest influence. This is not the time or yet the place to review the fascinating story of man's attempts and achievements in sharing his records. A voluminous, rich, and rewarding literature exists in this field. It is enough to remark that as laborious hand methods of duplication gave way to mechanized reproduction, individual ownership of books increasingly gave way to their cooperative assembly in libraries. The process through the centuries, paced by increasing literacy and ever increasing production, has resulted in the colossal accumulations of books, periodicals, manuscripts and other graphic as well as textual resources that constitute our libraries. The need to gather, arrange, store, make available and even to teach methods of using these libraries has caused a large group of devoted specialists to appear. The tasks of the librarian and much of his non-material reward are bound up with the responsibilities incident to the use of this invaluable heritage.

For half a millenium the book has dominated all other methods of textual reproduction. Its ubiquitous simplicity and availability in a civilization largely evolved through its use have tended to place it in a somewhat sacrosanct position. While more important manifestly than at any previous time and while meeting with distinction greater requirements than ever before, by its very nature and the limitations imposed by its production and use the printed word cannot meet demands that could not have been foreseen

at an earlier period. The book is inextricably woven into the very fabric of existence and this is as it should be, but the book is the form, not the substance. Undue preoccupation with form brings with it the possibility if not the certainty of missing the substance. The substance is the content, or the messages that each book contains. There is no inherent virtue in the book itself. Books which are used to fill shelves as furniture, or collected as objects of beauty, as they certainly can be, are not books; in reality they are objects that have assumed functions other than those for which they ostensibly at least were created. Similarly a library which is not used is not a library; it can be a museum or a place of pleasant resort but not the active center of intellectual activity that the term *Library* implies.

Through the respect accorded ancient lineage, through the impact of methods of education, the printed word has come to occupy a position of universal acceptance as the one proper method of using and perpetuating knowledge. We speak of the "right" to use books; what we mean is the "right" to use the contents of books. It is the old question of form and substance. A tradition however deeply ingrained cannot persist when conditions beyond the scope of traditional activity prevail. Now the book, though it is coping with the problems that caused its invention more successfully than ever before, cannot alone bear the burden. Technological innovations of many sorts have come forward to bolster its position and supplement and extend its services. Of these the group of techniques known as micro reproduction processes most closely follow the theory and practice of print; in fact, they serve in many instances to provide facsimile recreations of printed originals. Through them man has entered the microcosm in his search to find himself.

The ability to work in miniature is an effective yardstick with which to measure the technological proficiency of a culture. Miniaturization is an ancient concept of man. In the tombs of early Egyptians are found exquisitely detailed miniatures depicting many activities. These are in effect documents which have provided us with much information that might have otherwise been lost. To mechanize and mass produce miniatures at reductions so great that some type of optical magnification must be employed to use them, hence the term *micro*, is no small feat and it is by no means limited to textual materials. In other fields micro-chemical analysis, micro-wave transmission, micro-biology and even microfilm hosiery illustrate a trend. In each case, however, the method is entirely subordinate to the end in view. The method has no significance in itself, it is merely more efficient under existing circumstances. The same criteria should govern an approach to the use of micro techniques of documentary reproduction. They should be valued for the benefits they confer and not judged by standards of form devised for other methods of reproduction however traditionally familiar.

Why should anyone venture into the microcosm of micro-documentation? Why indeed, unless he must. Why should a scholar read a printed version if the manuscript still exists? Leaving out of account the not inconsiderable element of paleography, the dedicated research man attempts often at considerable sacrifice to consult his originals. Alas an original manuscript if preserved exists in a single location. Even books which may exist in many places usually gravitate to a relatively few centers, and not only old books are rare. No library however large can own more than a fraction of the total, the sub-fraction that the individual can acquire (and house) is infinitesimal. If one may not own, or borrow, if he cannot travel to a location where the original or a copy resides, is he then to give up hope? Not at all; it is for him that the microcosm exists if he will but discover it and equip himself physically and intellectually to make good use of its advantages.

In 1626, five years before his death, Captain John Smith (Sometime Governor of Virginia and Admiral of New England) published a little booklet *An Accidence or the Pathway to Experience Necessary for all Young Sea-Men* . . . of some 42 pages. There are perhaps a dozen copies known, nearly all in large libraries, although some twenty years ago a copy appeared on the market priced at around \$1,000. The text was nicely reprinted by Arber in the first years of the present century, but where can an interested reader consult the printed original? Few American Libraries are fortunate enough to own a copy. The manuscript has disappeared. It might be asked why the volume is important. For one reason it is the first book in English dealing with the technical aspects of ship construction. For another it contains one of the finest accounts of a sea fight of the period extant. A microfilm obtained at a cost of \$2.25 provided a facsimile copy which has been a source of enduring satisfaction. For the titles listed in Pollard and Redgrave's *Short Title Catalogue* and the Wing continuation, in Sabin, in Evans, in fact for most books and manuscripts that can be located in a Library, facsimile copies can now be had at prices that most can afford.

Microcosm indeed! This is a newly opened entry into the world of being, and of knowing for the sheer pleasure of it, or for such other reasons as may appertain. To know, to be able to read freely, is to savor the heady wine of free access to range backward, forward, and from side to side, virtually at will in mankind's richest treasure house. To glean and to relate the findings to individual existence is to distill and to enjoy the priceless essence which makes man man and holds his course ever upward toward the stars.

Vernon D. Tate, Librarian at the U. S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, is well known for his learned and experimental contributions in the field of miniature reproduction. He is secretary of the National Microfilm Association, and one of its founders. □♦

PROPOSAL FOR A NEGATIVE MICROFILM POOL

By Eugene Power

In our role as a service organization we receive many suggestions for microfilming projects — and these are most welcome because they enable us to keep informed of the needs of librarians and scholars. Almost all of these projects have merit, and we would like to do them.

It is our task to select those which are commercially feasible, i.e., which will pay their own way and even return a small profit to us; we have to decide how many customers we are likely to have, and set our price accordingly. If we think there will be only a few customers our price will be higher than it would be if we think there will be many customers.

There is a particular type of project which ought to be on film because:

1. it is difficult of access to scholars and librarians in this country;
2. it is needed now for particular research and will probably be needed by others in the future;
3. it is ephemeral or in short supply.

This kind of project will probably not be wanted by many librarians; yet it is eminently worth while and would be a valuable addition to the scholarly resources of the country.

In this dilemma we now propose that research libraries subscribe a small sum of money annually for the purchase of negative microfilm of those materials which are needed, but not in sufficient number to make a series practical. From this negative stockpile positive copies could be supplied to subscribing libraries at relatively low rates.

For example, suppose each of 15 libraries support such projects at the rate \$300.00 per

year. This amounts to \$4,500.00 annually which would be spent entirely for negative microfilm.

Under this plan positive film copies would sell to subscribing libraries at the rate of six cents per foot: in terms of pages, six cents for 12 pages of newspapers up to 30 periodical or book pages. In most cases it would be less expensive to purchase the film under these conditions than to rent or borrow it.


Provisions such as the following would be applicable:

1. the member libraries would choose their own projects;
2. an annual financial report would be made to contributing libraries so that the status of the fund would be known;
3. a bibliography of each project would be prepared upon the completion of the filming, and would be submitted to contributing libraries for their records.

Non-contributing libraries, on the other hand, would be eligible to purchase positive film copies only by paying higher rates and thus contributing indirectly to the further support of the project. It is suggested that such rates might vary from 12 cents per foot for orders amounting to 1,000 pages or more to 15 cents per foot for shorter orders: from about $\frac{1}{2}$ cent to $1\frac{1}{4}$ cents per page depending on the nature of the material.

The difference between the amounts charged to contributors and charged to non-contributors would be put into the fund towards the purchase of additional negative.

Perhaps the project of microfilming British provincial newspapers described by Professor Wiles on page 1 of this issue is such a project; it would seem to fit the conditions set. The filming of the complete file of the *Wiener Zeitung*, described in these pages last autumn, might be another.

Comments from MICROCOSM readers are invited. 

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